

creep from crooked side-streets
to stoop and scavenge in the grass
for shreds of vegetables and squashed fruit
cast out from the closed-up stalls

Jericho / Ai

The question mark in my belly stretches, kicks me
and I push back the sheet, watching you undress.
You put on the black mask and lie on your side.
I open the small sack of peppermint sticks
you always bring and take one out.
I suck it as you rub my shoulders, breasts,
then with one hand, round the hollows beneath,
carved by seven months of pregnancy,
stopping when your palm covers my navel.
You groan, as I slide the peppermint across my lips.

So I'm just fifteen, but I've seen others like you,
afraid, apologizing because they need something
maybe nobody else does.
You candy man, handing out the money, the sweets,
ashamed to climb your ladder of trouble.
Don't be. Make it to the top.
You'll find a ram's horn there.
Blow it seven times, yell goddamn
and watch the miniature hells
walking below you all fall down.

Soul Soul Super Bowl / George Barlow *(A Poem Evidently for Duane Thomas)*

Evidently, Duane Thomas
is a badass brother.
Evidently, the brother
was the Super Bowl . . .
running thru/around/under/over
Dolphins all day long . . .
shootin hoodoo thru the middle,

whippin mojo on the scoreboard,
sweepin blues on blue Dolphins
right & left . . .
running amuck & not givin a fuck.
Evidently, Duane Thomas
is a beautiful dude.

Evidently, the beboppin/flipfloppin/
ragmoppin/fingerpoppin
Dallas lockerroom ain't doin much
for one white boy's nerves:
the sweat on his face,
shirt & sportscaster's sport coat,
the tremor in his network voice
& the tremblin mike in his hand
all spotlight his stone fear.
Evidently, he's all wet
& scared shitless cause
he has to interview Duane Thomas
& he don't know if he can deal/cope
with a crazy nigguh like him:
"Well Duane, there's been
an awful lot of talk about your
strength, agility & speed . . .
That was quite a show you put on today . . .
Tell me, Duane, is Duane Thomas
as fast as some have said?"
Duane say, *evidently*—
Don't say nothin but, *evidently*—
Say it quick, cool & mean—say *evidently*.

Evidently, this white boy
expected a whole lotta
bullshit TV jocktalk
cause he got to sh-sh-sh-shakin
& uh . . . uh . . . stut . . . stut . . . stutterin
& carryin on;
started diggin deep down
in his TV bag of tricks
tryin his damndest
to find some kind of way to deal
with this crazy/arrogant nigguh

who *evidently* ain't sayin
nothing but *evidently*,
who's *evidently* talkin
straight out the middle of his
bad black mouth,
who's *evidently* got the audacity/
the gall/ the blazin unmitigated crust
to answer the question
he was asked with *evidently*.

Evidently, brother Duane
don't know how
to shuffle his football cleats
in the champagne & dirt
on the lockerroom floor.

Evidently, the brother
don't know how
to grin a big Uncle Remus grin
into the camera
& say, "I glad I win!"
& "Hi, Mama & everybody!"

Evidently, the quiverin white boy
has been fucked with/messed with/
dealt with/& castrated
by a big/crazy/badassed nigguh
who speaks English & Badassed Nigguhese.

Evidently, Duane Thomas
is a razor blade & a burp gun.

Evidently, Duane Thomas
is a cheetah & a night-train.

Evidently, Duane Thomas
is the brightest/blackest/baddest
star in the Texas sky

Evidently, brother Duane
is a beautiful dude.